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The Methods of Taxation compared with the established Principles of Justice. By DAVID MCG. MEANS. New York, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1909.—380 pp.

Treatises on taxation, may be divided into three classes: First, works which attempt to further some pet project of the advocate; second, scientific books which combine principle with application to existing facts; and third, theoretic works which indulge in broad generalizations and content themselves with remaining aloof from practical problems. The book of Mr. Means is a good example of the third class. Like Mr. Means's earlier volume on *Industrial Freedom*, published in 1897, it lets facts and figures, with a very few exceptions, severely alone. So far as it goes, the book is a moderate and sensible one; that is to say, the author recognizes the weakness of the general property tax but at the same time refuses to accept either the single tax or the income tax as an alternative.

The book, indeed, is not free from errors; as, for instance, in its failure to present the real weakness in Ricardo's excess-of-tax-above-price doctrine, and in its acceptance of John Stuart Mill's theory as to the necessity of exempting savings from an income tax, both of which mistakes have been frequently exposed. Moreover, Mr. Means's whole treatment of the English income tax would lead one to believe that his book was written half a century ago. The experience of the last generation and the complete change, even in English theory, seem not to exist for him.

Three chief criticisms, however, are to be urged against the book. In the first place, the author appears to be utterly unaware of the fact that there has been any discussion of these problems outside of England and the United States. We search in vain for any reference to the newer ideas of fiscal science on the continent of Europe. In the second place, Mr. Means, in his pursuit of the principles of justice, disregards completely most of the important problems which are confronting our American legislators at present. And thirdly, even in the matter of general principles, his conclusions are chiefly negative, calling attention to the defects of each method in turn and failing to elaborate any constructive system. The book, therefore, with all its good points, of which there are many, will, like Mr. Means's earlier work, probably fail to create any lasting or definite impression. It will not help the student much, because it contains virtually nothing new; and it will not help the legislator, because it is essentially destructive and critical.

E. R. A. S.